

# Senator Harkin: Champion for Creating Opportunities for Quality Education

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*"Education is the key to success in this country. It has the ability to transform an individual's life and give them opportunities above and beyond the generations that came before them. Every American should have a chance at an outstanding, well-rounded education." — Senator Tom Harkin*

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Senator Tom Harkin has spent his 40 years in Congress working to make investments in early learning, K-12, and post-secondary education that will pay dividends for future generations. He strongly believes that no student should be denied the opportunity for rich learning experiences because of a disability, family income or zip code. As the leading Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (the LHHS subcommittee), Harkin has made significant investments in education across the country, and particularly in Iowa. Since 2009, he has served as the Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and in this capacity, he has made historic reforms to the federal student lending program, saving taxpayers \$10 billion over a decade. **Among the highlights of Harkin's work to ensure that all Americans have access to a quality education:**

## **Expanding Access to Early Learning Programs:**

- Harkin increased annual funding for **Head Start** over seven-fold, from \$1.2 billion in 1989 to \$8.6 billion in 2014, and expanded enrollment to provide education, health, nutrition, and parent services for 930,000 low-income kids and their families.
- Harkin helped establish the **Early Head Start** program to provide comprehensive services for kids and families from before birth to age three.
- Harkin led the Senate reauthorization of the [Child Care and Development Block Grant](#) in March 2014 to expand access to and improve the quality of child care for the more than 1.5 million children and families that benefit from the federal child care subsidy program.
- Harkin has secured nearly \$900 million since 2011 for Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants that help more than a dozen states to improve the quality of early learning programs for children from birth through kindergarten.
- In 2014, as Chairman of the HELP Committee, Harkin authored and passed out of committee the comprehensive [Strong Start for America's Children Act](#) to expand access to high-quality care for children from birth to age five across the country.

## **Working to Strengthen America's K-12 Schools:**

- Harkin created the nation's first school modernization program and secured \$132.6 million in LHHS funding between 1998 and 2010 for "Harkin Grants" to repair public schools in 179 districts throughout Iowa.
- Harkin oversaw two reauthorizations of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) as Chairman of the HELP Committee.
- Between 1989 and 2014, Harkin increased funding for Title I of ESEA, the cornerstone federal program to ensure low-income students to reach high academic standards, by 258 percent.
- Harkin authored the [Strengthening America's Schools Act of 2013](#) that establishes a framework to ensure that all children graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and/or a career.

## **Promoting Education for Children with Disabilities:**

- Harkin co-sponsored the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) amendments in 1990, 1997, and 2004, and authored provisions to ensure that all states provide early childhood special education services to children with disabilities from birth to age five, that children with disabilities receive early intervening services to identify and address learning problems as early as possible, and that children with autism and traumatic brain injuries are eligible for special education services.
- Harkin secured \$12.2 billion in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* for students with disabilities.
- Harkin introduced the [Keeping All Students Safe Act of 2014](#), a bill to stop the use of dangerous seclusion and restraints in schools nationwide.

### **Keeping College Affordable:**

- Since 1989, Harkin has worked to more than double the maximum Pell Grant aid that a student may receive each year to \$5,730. Additionally, the number of students who qualify for this assistance has increased from 3.3 million to 8.7 million student borrowers.
- Harkin oversaw the passage of the [\*Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2010\*](#), a landmark bill to make college more affordable and accessible for students across the country by saving taxpayers \$10 billion over a decade by halting wasteful subsidies to banks for loan servicing and redirecting that money to help low income and middle class families afford college.
- Harkin led a 2010 oversight investigation into for-profit colleges and released a [report](#) that showed despite an annual taxpayer investment of more than \$32 billion, more than half of the students who enroll in for-profit colleges leave with debt but no diploma, degree or job.
- Harkin introduced the [\*Higher Education Affordability Act of 2014\*](#), a proposal to reauthorize the *Higher Education Act* that takes a comprehensive approach to rein in the rapidly rising cost of college and ensure that the higher education system is more transparent and better serves students and families.

For more information, please visit Senator Harkin's website at <http://harkin.senate.gov/>, or follow him on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/tomharkin> or Twitter <https://twitter.com/SenatorHarkin>.